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ABSTRACT

This study of the personnel requirements and hiring patterns of academic libraries draws on data collected from academic library position announcements issued nationwide during the fourth quarter of 1980. Data on 224 announcements were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, and the resulting statistics are interpreted as a means of describing facets of the contemporary job market--its positions and salaries, geographical distribution, and required skills for technical services, public services, administrative, and other positions. Traditional positions, principally in cataloging and reference, account for the majority of the listings, and requested skills in the physical sciences, business, mathematics, and computer applications were found to be conspicuous by their absence. Six tables display the data discussed in the report, and eight references are listed. (RAA)

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Emerging Personnel Requirements in Academic Libraries as Reflected in Recent Position Announcements

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Abstract

This study analyzes data taken from academic library position announcements issued nationwide in the first quarter of 1980. After coding and machine manipulation of the data, the resulting statistics are interpreted as a means of describing facets of the contemporary job market--its positions and salaries, geographical distribution, and required skills.

Primary conclusions center on the composite character of the announcements. Traditional positions, principally in cataloging and refernece, account for a majority of the offerings, and requested skills in physical sciences, business, mathematics, and computer applications are conspicuous by their absence. The job market represented in this sample suggests that academic libraries carry a conservative hiring profile into the 1980s.

Library literature is replete with studies of the profession's job market. The ALA's annual survey of placements and salaries is the best known of this genre. The ALA reports center on correspondence with library school placement offices, providing data on positions actually filled by recent graduates and the salaries they received.[1] These data have the advantage of certainty; they give confirmed analysis of aggregate supply and demand, of an institution's placement record, and of entry-level salaries. A second type of job market study examines the dimensions of library positions based upon their advertised requirements. This approach lacks the certainty of the first since it deals with announcements rather than filled positions. But it offers a more current data base and the advantages of spreading before the reader a set of qualifications which employers seek.[2] In making career decisions, in hiring, and in designing curricula, professional librarians need the kinds of information provided by both approaches. The study that follows examines the characteristics of the academic library job market from a sample of announcements which appeared in early 1980.

Data used in the study came primarily from the position announcement file maintained by the Graduate School of Library and Information Science (GSLIS) of the University of Texas at Austin. The file includes announcements sent directly to the school and similar advertisements gleaned from the professional literature and a number of regional placement bulletins.[3] As a result, the geographical distribution of the positions, shown in Table I, ranges from 44 (or 19.6% of the total of

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224 positions) in the West South Central Region, as defined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), to a low of 7 (or 3.1%) in the East South Central Region. However, all nine BLS regions are represented, and the regional variations in numbers of positions included in the study are due at least partly to variations in the numbers of announcements available and not solely to variations in decisions about sending announcements to the GSLIS. All jobs appeared in the position file between January 10 and March 10 of 1980.

The announcements were coded into a machine-readable format with each position constituting a separate case described by up to ten variables, the required qualifications. In this form the central tendencies and correlation characteristics of the data could be determined using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences' subprograms for condescriptive statistics and crosstabs.[4]

TABLE I : Distribution of Positions by Bureau of Labor Statistics Region (N=224, % expressions apply to N=224)

Region	Number of Positions
I. New England (Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut)	13 (5.8%)
II. Middle Atlantic (New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania)	21 (9.4%)
III. East North Central (Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin)	36 (16.1%)
IV. West North Central (Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas)	24 (10.7%)
V. South Atlantic (Delaware, Maryland, D.C., Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida)	29 (12.9%)
VI. East South Central (Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi)	7 (3.1%)
VII. West South Central (Arkansas, Lousisiana, Oklahoma, Texas)	44 (19.6%)
VIII. Mountain (Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada)	23 (10.3%)
IX. Pacific (Washington, Oregon, California, Alaska, Hawaii)	27 (12.1%)

TABLE II:Numbers and Mean Salaries of Position Types
(N=224, % expressions apply to the total, N=224)

Position Type	Number of Positions Advertised	Mean Salary
Cataloging	60(26.8%)	14,174.09
Reference	50(22.3%)	14,769.00
Head	17(7.6%)	22,629.80
Acquisitions	11(4.9%)	14,216.00
Science	11(4.9%)	15,628.86
General Technical Service	9(4.0%)	15,628.86
Serials	9(4.0%)	14,370.00
Documents	8(3.6%)	13,724.00
Administrator	6(2.7%)	*
Bibliographer	5(2.2%)	18,274.00
General Public Services	5(2.2%)	11,444.80
Audiovisual	4(1.8%)	14,163.00
Engineering	4(1.8%)	13,833.33
Curriculum	3(1.3%)	17,784.50
Area Specialist(Ibero America, Black Studies, Slavic)	3(1.3%)	17,721.00
Rare Items(Manuscripts, Rare Books)	3(1.3%)	12,500.00
Circulation	2(0.9%)	17,569.50
Data Processing	2(0.9%)	17,000.00
Interlibrary Loan	2(0.9%)	14,250.00
Learning Resources	2(0.9%)	16,100.00
Map	2(0.9%)	13,512.00
General Librarian	2(0.9%)	19,422.00
Business/Economics	1(0.4%)	17,000.00
Reader Services	1(0.4%)	17,000.00
External Degree Program	1(0.4%)	16,463.00
Microforms	1(0.4%)	14,000.00

* no salary data provided by announcements

Tables I and II deal with the entire sample, aggregating the advertised positions by location and by type. The wide geographical distribution of positions in Table I has already been pointed out. Lack of dominance by a single region or small group of regions--even those with proximity to the University of Texas--emphasizes the dispersed nature of the contemporary academic job market and underscores the importance of geographic mobility to those who seek employment in academic libraries.

Table II shows that a wide variety of position types, 26 in all, were advertised by the academic libraries in the sample. Yet despite this broad array, less than one-fifth of the types subsumes two-thirds of the actual positions, with cataloging and reference comprising nearly half of the total. This sample suggests that the academic library job market is dominated by rather traditional personnel functions and position offerings.

The salary schedule included in Table II represents the 181 cases that specified a salary. The mean salary offered for all positions was $14,923.37 with a standard deviation of $3,616.57. The individual means should not be taken to represent standards of compensations for the various position types. Large salaries resulting from such factors as experience or the location of the advertising institution skew some of the small samples in the table.[5]

TABLE III: Academic Technical Services Positions

(N = 100, % refers to relationships within each position type: $\frac{\text{qualification named}}{\text{total number of announcements}}$)

Qualifications named in Position Announcements	Catalog-ing	Acquisi-tions	General Technical Services	Serials	Documents	Data Processing	Microfilms
Educational background							
MLS	60(100%)	11(100%)	9(100%)	9(100%)	8(100%)	2(100%)	1(100%)
Second masters	3(5%)	--	2(22.2%)	--	2(25%)	--	--
PhD	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
BA/background,science or math	4(6.7%)	--	--	--	--	--	--
BA/background,social science or humanities	4(6.7%)	1(9.1%)	2(22.2%)	1(11.1%)	1(12.5%)	--	--
BS in education	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
BS in computer science	--	--	--	1(11.1%)	--	2(100%)	--
BS in health science	1(1.7%)	--	--	--	--	--	--
Experience							
None	25(41.7%)	3(27.3%)	1(11.1%)	2(22.2%)	2(25%)	1(50%)	--
Experience, no enumeration	11(18.3%)	3(27.3%)	4(44.4%)	5(55.5%)	4(50%)	1(50%)	1(100%)
1 year	4(6.7%)	--	--	--	--	--	--
2 years	10(16.7%)	2(18.2%)	--	1(11.1%)	2(25%)	--	--
3 years	6(10 %)	1(9.1%)	1(11.1%)	--	--	--	--
4 years	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
5 years or more	4(6.7%)	2(18.2%)	3(33.3%)	1(11.1%)	--	--	--
Automated Systems							
None	16(27.7%)	7(63.6%)	5(55.6%)	4(44.4%)	7(87.5%)	1(50%)	1(100%)
OCLC	39(65.0%)	2(18.2%)	2(22.2%)	1(11.1%)	--	--	--
General on-line search	2(3.3%)	--	1(11.1%)	--	1(12.5%)	--	--
Computer application	2(3.3%)	2(18.2%)	1(11.1%)	1(11.1%)	--	1(50%)	--
On-line cataloging	1(1.7%)	--	--	--	--	--	--
BRS	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Catline	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Dialog	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Lockheed	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
NLM	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Orbit	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
RLIN	--	--	--	1(11.1%)	--	--	--
Languages							
None	30(50%)	6(54.5%)	8(89.9%)	8(88.8%)	6(75%)	2(100%)	1(100%)
French	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
German	1(1.7%)	1(9.1%)	1(10.1%)	--	--	--	--
Spanish	3(5%)	--	--	--	1(12.5%)	--	--
Other European	2(3.8%)	--	--	--	--	--	--
African	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Asian	1(1.7%)	--	--	--	--	--	--
Two or More	13(21.7%)	2(18.2%)	--	--	1(12.5%)	--	--
Foreign Language, no enumeration	10(16.7%)	2(18.2%)	--	1(11.1%)	--	--	--

TABLE IV: Academic Public Service Positions

(N = 63, % refers to relationships within each position type: $\frac{\text{qualification named}}{\text{total number of announcements}}$)

Qualifications named in Position Announcements	Reference	General Public Service	Circulation	Learning Resources	Reader Services	External Degree	Interlibrary loan
Educational background							
MLS	50(100%)	5(100%)	2(100%)	2(100%)	1(100%)	1(100%)	2(100%)
Second masters	15(30%)	--	--	--	--	--	--
PhD	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
BA/background, science or math	7(14%)	--	--	--	--	--	--
BA/background, social science or humanities	2(4%)	--	--	--	--	--	--
BS in education	2(4%)	--	--	--	--	--	--
BS in computer science	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
BS in health science	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Experience							
None	19(38%)	3(60%)	--	--	--	1(100%)	--
Experience, no enumeration	13(26%)	--	1(50%)	1(50%)	--	--	--
1 year	4(8%)	1(20%)	--	--	--	--	1(50%)
2 years	5(10%)	1(20%)	1(50%)	1(50%)	1(100%)	--	1(50%)
3 years	4(8%)	--	--	--	--	--	--
4 years	1(2%)	--	--	--	--	--	--
5 years or more	4(8%)	--	--	--	--	--	--
Automated Systems							
None	33(66%)	4(80%)	2(100%)	1(50%)	1(100%)	1(100%)	1(50%)
OCLC	--	--	--	1(50%)	--	--	1(50%)
General on-line search	12(24%)	1(20%)	--	--	--	--	--
Computer Application	3(6%)	--	--	--	--	--	--
On-line cataloging	1(2%)	--	--	--	--	--	--
BRS	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Catline	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Dialog	1(2%)	--	--	--	--	--	--
Lockheed	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
NLM	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Orbit	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
RLIN	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Languages							
None	40(80%)	4(80%)	1(50%)	2(100%)	1(100%)	1(100%)	2(100%)
French	1(2%)	--	--	--	--	--	--
German	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Spanish	1(2%)	--	1(50%)	--	--	--	--
Other European	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
African	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Asian	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Two or more	2(4%)	--	--	--	--	--	--
Foreign Language, no enumeration	6(12%)	1(20%)	--	--	--	--	--

Table V: Administrative, General, and Special Academic Positions

(N = 41, % refers to relationships within each position type: $\frac{\text{qualification named}}{\text{total number of announcements}}$)

Qualifications named in Position Announcements	Head	Administrator	General Librarian	Science	Engineering	Business/ Economics
Educational background						
MLS	17(100%)	6(100%)	2(100%)	11(100%)	4(100%)	1(100%)
Second masters	--	1(16.7%)	--	5(45.5%)	--	1(100%)
PhD	3(23.9%)	2(33.3%)	--	--	--	--
BA/background, science or math	1(5.9%)	--	--	3(27.3%)	2(50%)	--
BA/background, social science or humanities	--	--	--	--	--	--
BS in education	--	--	--	--	--	--
BS in computer science	--	--	--	--	--	--
BS in health science	--	--	--	--	--	--
Experience						
None	1(5%)	--	1(50%)	1(9.1%)	1(25%)	1(100%)
Experience, no enumeration	6(35.5%)	3(50%)	1(50%)	5(45.5%)	2(50%)	--
1 year	--	--	--	--	--	--
2 years	2(11.8%)	--	--	--	1(25%)	--
3 years	3(17.6%)	--	--	2(18.2%)	--	--
4 years	--	--	--	2(18.2%)	--	--
5 years or more	5(29.4%)	3(50%)	--	1(9.1%)	--	--
Automated Systems						
None	16(94.1%)	5(83.5%)	2(100%)	7(63.6%)	2(50%)	1(100%)
OCLC	--	--	--	--	--	--
General on-line search	--	1(16.7%)	--	3(27.3%)	2(50%)	--
Computer Application	1(5.8%)	--	--	1(9.1%)	--	--
On-line cataloging	--	--	--	--	--	--
BRS	--	--	--	--	--	--
Catline	--	--	--	--	--	--
Dialog	--	--	--	--	--	--
Lockheed	--	--	--	--	--	--
NLM	--	--	--	--	--	--
Orbit	--	--	--	--	--	--
RLIN	--	--	--	--	--	--
Languages						
None	17(100%)	5(83.3%)	2(100%)	8(72.7%)	4(100%)	1(100%)
French	--	--	--	--	--	--
German	--	--	--	--	--	--
Spanish	--	--	--	1(9.1%)	--	--
Other European	--	--	--	--	--	--
African	--	--	--	--	--	--
Asian	--	1(16.7%)	--	--	--	--
Two or more	--	--	--	--	--	--
Foreign Language, no enumeration	--	--	--	2(18.2%)	--	--

Table VI: Remaining Academic Positions

(N = 20, % refers to relationships within each position type: $\frac{\text{qualification named}}{\text{total number of announcements}}$)

Qualifications named in Position Announcements	Biblio-grapher	Audio-visual	Curriculum	Area Specialist	Rare Items	Map
Educational background						
MLS	5(100%)	4(100%)	3(100%)	3(100%)	3(100%)	2(100%)
Second masters	--	--	--	1(33%)	--	1(50%)
PhD	--	--	--	--	--	--
BA/background, science or math	1(20%)	--	--	--	--	--
BA/background, social science or humanities	--	--	--	--	2(60.6%)	1(50%)
BS in education	--	1(25%)	--	--	--	--
BS in computer science	--	--	--	--	--	--
BS in health science	--	--	--	--	--	--
Experience						
None	3(60%)	1(25%)	--	1(33.3%)	--	2(100%)
Experience, no enumeration	1(20%)	3(75%)	3(100%)	--	2(66.6%)	--
1 year	--	--	--	2(66.6%)	--	--
2 years	--	--	--	--	1(33.3%)	--
3 years	1(20%)	--	--	--	--	--
4 years	--	--	--	--	--	--
5 years or more	--	--	--	--	--	--
Automated Systems						
None	5(100%)	4(100%)	2(66.6%)	2(66.6%)	3(100%)	2(100%)
OCLC	--	--	--	1(33.3%)	--	--
General on-line search	--	--	1(33.3%)	--	--	--
Computer application	--	--	--	--	--	--
On-line cataloging	--	--	--	--	--	--
BRS	--	--	--	--	--	--
Catline	--	--	--	--	--	--
Dialog	--	--	--	--	--	--
Lockheed	--	--	--	--	--	--
NLM	--	--	--	--	--	--
Orbit	--	--	--	--	--	--
RLIN	--	--	--	--	--	--
Languages						
None	1(20%)	3(75%)	3(100%)	1(33.3%)	2(66.6%)	2(100%)
French	--	--	--	--	--	--
German	--	--	--	--	--	--
Spanish	--	--	--	1(33.3%)	--	--
Other European	--	--	--	--	--	--
African	--	--	--	--	--	--
Asian	--	--	--	--	--	--
Two or more	4(80%)	--	--	1(33.3%)	1(33.3%)	--
Foreign language, no enumeration	--	1(25%)	--	--	--	--

The treatment of specific position requirements, the data summarized in Tables III-VI, shows a surprisingly narrow range of advertised prerequisites for the sample positions. The MLS is a universal requirement; it was cited in all 224 cases. But except for this degree, the recurring requirements are few. General experience was the second most often repeated request, appearing in some 30% of the total announcements. The remaining qualifications, repeated in the tables, divide the other 70% of the sample into small shares.

Some individual positions present clusters of repetitive requirements that aid the researcher's attempts to present an aggregate picture of job requirements. Some of the correlations come as no great shock. Experience and educational attainment were highest for the Head and Administrator positions featured in Table V. Bibliographers require exceptional language competence. But for two position types, cataloging and reference, the data present a sample that lends itself to in-depth analysis of qualifications.

Both cataloging and reference present a high percentage of entry-level positions, 41.7% and 38% respectively. Reference positions require more intensive educational preparation outside library science, highlighted by the request in 30% of its advertisements for a second master's. Cataloging requires more rigorous training in automated systems and greater language facility. For reference positions, requests for automated experience center on computer-based searching techniques, while knowledge of OCLC appears a must in gaining a cataloging position. Half of the cataloging positions required knowledge of a foreign language with 20% of these vacancies preferring two or more langauges.

Language concentration spanned the whole range of major European idioms, with no pattern of single-language predominance.

Conclusions

In its projections of library employment, a Bureau of Labor Statistics monograph cited a short-term shortage of supervisors and administrators in academic libraries. And, noting the movement of these institutions toward increased use of automation and instructional technology, the same study predicted a long-term need for computer specialists and media librarians.[6] The latest ALA surveys echo the BLS report, adding librarians with natural science, business, mathematics, and computer backgrounds to the high-demand category.

The data presented here only partially confirm the previous observations. The relatively large number of administrative positions shown in Table IV and the high salaries that they command attest to the demand for skilled managers. Yet these positions tended to be only vaguely described, hiding from the reader tangible qualifications by which to measure the skills required.

Scientific, mathematical, business, and computer-oriented positions show neither wide demand nor large rewards. Educational background requirements actually included more requests for BAs in the humanities and social sciences than in the physical sciences and mathematics combined. A total of 16 jobs, those enumerated under Science, Engineering, and Business/Economics, clearly fall within the demands for technically oriented librarians. The 13 salaries reported for these positions averaged

$14,950.77, little more than the aggregated mean for the entire sample. Apparently the buyers' market has affected the demand for technically skilled librarians as well as their "generalist" colleagues. The lack of technical emphasis in academic position advertisements can also be seen in the extent of requirements for expertise in automated systems. Of the 224 jobs, only 100 required any type of computer-based experience; and two fields, OCLC and general on-line search, constituted 73% of the total of 100.

The more one studies position announcements, the more one is impressed by their ambiguity. David C. Geneway has suggested that this vagueness is purposeful. To support this suggestion, he demonstrated that a large number of job claimants in his sample did not fit the originally-advertised requirements.[8] This, I suspect, is also characteristic of a job market in which an average of 73 candidates apply for each available academic library position. Vagueness allows for wide latitudes in hiring in a buyers' market. But vagueness aside, the most striking characteristic of the announcements cited in this survey is their traditional outlook in types of positions offered and qualifications required. The academic library job market, as reflected in the present data, offers little incentive to librarians to acquire a diversified educational background or computer expertise despite a continually discussed need for new professionals with these skills.

References

[1]The latest ALA report appears as Carol L. Learmont, "Placements & Salaries 1979: Wider Horizons," Library Journal 105, no. 19 (Nov. 1, 1980): 2271-2277.

[2]The best recently published model of this type of analysis is that by Dean Schmidt and James Swanton, "Qualifications Sought by Employers of Health Sciences Librarians 1977-1978," Bulletin of the Medical Library Association 68, no.1(Jan. 1980): 58-63.

[3]Published sources of the job announcements used in the survey were: Affirmative Action Register, Bulletin of the Medical Library Association, The Chronicle of Higher Education, Iowa Jobline, Journal of Academic Librarianship, Library Journal, Library Openings in Ohio, Music Library Association Job List, North Carolina Newsflash, Placement Bulletin of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Position Openings in Minnesota and Adjoining States, Positions Open (State Library of Pennsylvania), Pratt Graduate School of Library and Information Science Weekly Placement Bulletin, University of Michigan School of Library Science Placement Bulletin.

[4]Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, 2nd. ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975). For a description of the condescriptive statistics and crosstabs subprograms, see pages 185-193 and 218-248. Readers familiar with position announcements will recognize difficulties inherent in placing these data in neat categories. For the purpose of this study:

salaries presented in the form of a range were entered at the mid-point of that range, rounded to the nearest dollar; split positions were assigned by duties mentioned in the announcement or, if this criterion proved meaningless, by the first-named position; qualifications denoted "required," "preferred," or "highly desirable" were coded, qualifications denoted "desired" were not.

[5]One example of a clearly skewed salary is that of the Circulation librarians shown in Table II. One of the two positions, a California job, offered a salary of $29,289 which produces a mean figure considerably higher than the collective mean even when balanced against a below-average salary of $14,750 offered by the second position in the category.

[6]United States. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Library Manpower: A Study of Demand and Supply (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975) pp.xii,6,41.

[7]Learmont, "Placements and Salaries 1979," p.2271. Carol L. Learmont and Richard Troiano, "Placements & Salaries 1978: New Directions," Library Journal 104, no.13 (July 1, 1979) p.1422.

[8]David C. Geneway, "Bar Coding and the Librarian Supermarket: An Analysis of Advertised Library Vacancies," Library Journal 103, no.3 (Feb. 1, 1978): 323-324.